

EDWIN MASON

Mr. OLIVER's

SERMON

Before the

LORD-MAYOR, &c.

this City at the Cathedral Church of

At St. Paul's Cathedral, October 23, 1698.

GOOD-BELOW

EDWIN, Mayor.

Jovis xxvii die Octobris, 1598.

*Annoque R.Rs Wilhelmi Tertii
Anglie, &c. Decima.*

THis Court doth desire Mr. Oliver
to Print his Sermon Preached be-
fore the Lord-Mayor and Aldermen of
this City at the Cathedral Church of
St. Paul, on Sunday last.

GOODFELLOWS

40 W.
40 Th.

A
SERMON
PREACH'D in
St. PAUL's Cathedral,
BEFORE THE
Lord-Mayor,
ALDERMEN, &c.
On SUNDAY, *October 23.* 1698.

By **EDWARD OLIVER, M.A.**
Fellow of *Corpus Christi College, Cambridge*; and Chaplain to
the Right Honourable **GEORGE** Earl of *Northampton.*

The Second Edition.

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ALDERMEN

On 21st Nov 1903.

BY EDWARD OLIVER, M.A.

1840-1841. The following is a list of the names of the students who were admitted to the college during the year 1840-1841. The names are arranged in alphabetical order.

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1990

Animal for Edward Davis, near Lawrence Park Care
and Mrs. J. H. Davis, INDOXVILLE

S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

Lord-Mayor, &c.

J O H N IV. 24.

God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.



OU R Blessed Redeemer. neglected no opportunity of exerting that universal Charity he came into the world to teach, that thus by his Practice his Doctrine might gain Credit, and the stiffest Prejudices be wrought off and conquer'd by so powerful an Exam-

ple. Answerable to this we find him here in this Chapter bearing with patience the Ignorance and subtle Shifts of a Woman; with tenderness reproving the Sins of an heinous Offender; with kindness, though himself a Jew, conversing with a Samaritan.

Thus by his Affability and stooping to the meanest Capacity, does he convince the Understanding that was fraught with Prejudice and Infidelity; subject that Will that was led captive at the pleasure of each unruly Lust: In short, of an Idolater and Adult'ers, makes a Convert, and a Teacher of others.

Such care does he take to have all come to the knowledge of the Truth, that we find him supplying the defects of Education, removing those Disadvantages she lay under; and what the Jews might have learnt from the Books of their Prophets (which the Samaritans did wholly reject, and were not capable of understanding), he explains in plainness, nay, more than he does in his own Nation, declares, (that he was the Messiah, and was to introduce a new and better Law. So much advantage has Ignorance, and a Confessor of Sins, above an affected Pretence

Pretence to Knowledge, and a counterfeited Zeal.

There is no Verse that has relation to this Story, but would afford many useful Remarks: But since I have pitch'd upon this of the Text, I shall make no further notice of the rest, than as they are particularly necessary to the Explication of it. And in order to this, 'twill be expedient to consider to what this Position is oppos'd: And we shall best understand what is here meant by *Spirit and Truth*, if we look back a little, and take notice how it was introduced. — (Nor will the Reflections which I shall make be improper for this Auditory; where, though I believe there is neither Jew nor Samaritan to convince, yet we have those, I fear, sometimes to deal with, who make such a Medley of Religion, that they are near as dangerous to the Truth of it. For so do the *Romanists* confound their Will-worship and Idolatry with the Essentials of Christianity, that they take both from its *Truth* and *Spirituality*. So do other Dissenters from Us mistake the true Notion of its *Spirituality*, that they derogate from the very Essentials of our most Holy Religion, and would go about so per-

persuade us its Truth consisted in mere Any Notions, and Wild Enthusiasm.) — Our Blessed Saviour having convinc'd this Samaritan of his extraordinary Knowledge, by telling her all that ever she did, she is so far from denying or concealing her fault, that she owns him for a Prophet, and as such, begs his Instructions in that great Dispute that was between the Jews and those of her own Nation. It being necessary for her that knew her Sins were many and heinous, and had not only learnt out of the Books of Moses, that there could be no Atonement made between God and her, no Remission obtain'd without a Sacrifice; but also, that the Almighty would accept of no other Sacrifice, but such as was offer'd him in that one Place he had chosen to put his Name in; nay, yet more, That all Sacrifices that were offer'd elsewhere were esteem'd no better than of willful Murder. It was necessary, I say, for her to understand how and where this her Offering would be accepted. Nor could she judge any more fit to resolve her, than one of whose great Wisdom and Knowledge she had then had such full Proof and Experience. The Religions that

at this time took place in the World, were those of the Jews and Gentiles: The Jews worshipp'd only One and the True God; the Gentiles abounded in such as were False, to whom they paid their Adoration. Now the Samaritans made a mixture of both these, and added to the Worship of the true God the Adoration of the false. For when Shalmanesser carried Israel away captive into Assyria, he sent the Refuge of divers Nations to possess Samaria and the cities of it; who in the beginning of their dwelling there feared not the Lord, therefore the Lord sent lions among them and slew some of them. To remove which Plague their King sent one of the Priests which he brought from thence, to dwell there, and to teach them the manner of the God of the land: So they feared the Lord, and served their own gods, ver. 33. that is, admitted the Religion of the Jews, and yet retained their own Superstition.

Now though the Jews and Samaritans differ'd in many things, as were easy to show, yet they chiefly disagreed in the Place of their Sacrifices. These pleading the Practice of their Forefathers, whom they, forgetful of their true Religion, esteemed Abraham, Isaac, and Ja-

cob, believing themselves descended from them, and settled in this Land ever since the departure of Moses out of Egypt; in the mean time upbraiding the Jews, that their Religion was only founded on Hearsay and Opinion.

The Jews justly esteem'd theirs the Holy Temple of Jerusalem, where God appear'd between the Cherubims, where was an unquestioned Succession of Priests to minister, and where their Kings had always offer'd Sacrifice.

On the other side, the Samaritans boasted their Mount Gerizim as the Place chosen of God; where Abraham (as their Tradition would make them believe) in obedience would have offer'd up his Son Isaac, and where Jacob returning out of Mesopotamia worshipp'd.

Nay, so were they possess'd with a belief of the Antiquity of their Temple, that in the time of Ptolemy Philometor, about a hundred and sixty years before Christ, they undertook, with the hazard of their Lives, to prove it before that of Jerusalem, even out of the Laws of Moses. So strangely mistaken may the fond boasts be of Succession and Antiquity, and so little Credit to be given to bare Tradition.

This

This was the foundation of the Woman's Question (v. 20.), and this Question she justly thought *dignus Vindice nodus*, worthy of a Prophet to resolve. Now so does our Saviour frame his Answer, as to declare the Worship of the Jewes preferable to that of the Samaritans, and consequently Jerusalem to Mount Gerizim; but adds, that the whole Question will henceforth cease, while both their Religions were to be abolish'd, the one as False, the other as Imperfect. The Samaritan's false, because mix'd with Idolatry; wherefore our Saviour says, *Ye worship ye know not what*, v. 22. The Jew's, though it must be allow'd true, because he adds, *We worship what we know*, yet to be abolish'd, because weak and imperfect: Neither in the mountain shall ye worship, because Idolatry shall cease, as the Prophets foretold, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, and his libe be free Duty, abolish. Nor in Jerusalem, because Sacrifice and Oblations he will no longer accept, but a third and perfect Worship should be establish'd; for the hour comes and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him, v. 23. In which

Il. 2. 18.

Answer of our Blessed Saviour, the Deficiency of both the former Religions, and the Excellency of that which was to succeed is plainly set forth. For the worship of the Samaritans was not in *Truth*, but abounded with *Errors* and *Ignorance*; That of the Jews was not in *Spirit*, but consisted in *Bodily Observances* and *Outward Ceremonies*, which were but *Shadows* of things to come; and it was only the Christians that could henceforth be true Worshippers; whilst their Religion alone was endued with what the others were deficient in (viz.) *Spirit* and *Truth*. Nor could any other Religion than this be proper to be establish'd, no other being agreeable to the Nature and our Notion of a God; and this in the Text is given as the fundamental reason why the others were abolish'd; and this introduc'd: *God is a Spirit*, &c.

And that the Christian Religion is thus agreeable to the Nature of God, I shall endeavour to shew, by declaring what is here requir'd of us,

I. By worshipping in Spirit.

II. In Truth.

And

And by the way shall take notice of such as deviate from this Worship: Which I desire may serve as an Application of the Discourse, since 'tis all which I fear your Patience will permit me to make.

And I am to show what is meant by *Worshipping God in Spirit.*

1. Then do we worship him in *Spirit*, when we are possess'd with a true and lively sense of his Divine Majesty, Power, and Rule over us; humbly acknowledge his unspeakable Goodness; so adore his Infinite Wisdom which searches our hearts, that we in all things submit to his All-wise Will: When we love him with all our Hearts and all our Souls, and yet fear and reverence him as a Father, and with the greatest cheerfulness obey whatsoever he has been pleas'd to command us. When we not only give up our Souls pure and spotless, but keep our Bodies too fit Temples for the Holy Ghost, and thus join'd, offer up our selves one Reasonable Service.

For when we have once this true and awful Notion of the Almighty, we must and shall exert

exert our selves in acts of Piety and publick Testimonies of Devotion; Express our Sense of his Power and Rule by our daily Supplications; our Acknowledgments of his Goodness by our continual Praises; our Love by our Charity to our Neighbours, and Zeal for his Worship and Service; our Fear, by our abstaining from the least appearance of Evil, lest we offend so gracious a Father.

And all this with Humility and Reverence, Decency and Order, with Obedience to Authority, and respect to those whom he has set over us: These being most certain and spiritual Duties, nay the only things wherein we are capable of testifying that we really do *worship Him in spirit*. And once come up to these just and awful Thoughts of the Divine Majesty, which produce such true acts of Devotion and Piety, How agreeable to his Nature must be this our Sacrifice, how much beyond whatever the policy of the wisest Hea-then could invent; nay even what he himself instituted in the Jewish Religion.

God is a Spirit; That is, a Being incorporeal and Immaterial; his Worship therefore ought to be like Himself, refin'd and spiritual,
and

and to deduce its Source from the Reason and Soul of Man; not to consist barely in outward Acts and Things meerly Corporeal.

But this confes'd God had permitted, nay commanded such a Worship under the Old Law; but this was only Temporary, and fitted for a People carnal and stiff-neck'd; but now the *substance of time was come*, it no longer suited the Divine Majesty, who therefore commands a Worship more Real and Divine. If therefore our Actions do not proceed from the Heart and Soul; that is, from a lively Faith, fervent Love and sincere Principles of Holiness, they can't be acceptable to God; nor is this our Worship agreeable to his Nature. But if they take their Rise from the Heart, then are they a *spiritual Worship*; for thus are they *spiritual* in their Original, Source and Cause, and bear some proportion even with the Almighty himself, who is a Spirit. And this I take to be the true meaning of *worshipping in spirit*.

How grossly then do they err who would make all Religion to consist in Notion and Talk, and frame to themselves a Worship that should have nothing of reality in it, but at once mock both God and Man? These are they

they that are above Ordinances, and all manner of Rule, guided by Fancy and a frantick Zeal, which they put on to deceive the giddy Multitude with a noise of Holiness: who think it enough to vent and boast their Notions of the Power and Excellency of Faith, but never take care to shew it by their Works, may esteem the pressing of them as necessary to Salvation, nothing less than Superstition and Popery: that will talk of Love to God, and Familiarity with the Person of Christ; and yet forget their Obedience to the Magistrates whom he has set over them, and hate, back-bite and slander their Neighbour: that pretend to the greatest Zeal for God's glory, yet are so far from abhorring Sacrilege, that 'tis one great Mark of their Godliness. Blessed God! If these be the effects of *spiritual Worship*, we have chang'd for the worse, and are much farther from Heaven than the Jew or Samaritan.

Others there are that go not so far, yet urge this Text against all manner of Ceremonies, and preferib'd Forms of Devotion. Are we, say they, to *worship him in spirit*? what means then this Show and outward Pomp, this Rubrick and these Forms? Shall we again be bound

bound up with Jewish Slavery? Are we not promised the Assistance of the Spirit, and shall Christ dye in vain to free us?

We willingly confess that the Worship under the Gospel is more refined and spiritual than that under the Law; but that it should be wholly so, debarr'd of all outward Ceremonies, we affirm to be against the Practice of all Ages, nay, utterly impossible. Is not the whole Question here concerning Publick Worship, the one false and idolatrous, the other gross and carnal; and is it any other than a Publick Worship that our Saviour opposes to them, *Spinn* to the one, and *Truth* to the other? Is not the very Word he uses, *εξωτερικῶν*, most expressive of an outward Act of Devotion and Adoration? Did ever the Jews who knew what they worshipp'd, do it without Ceremony? And have we not Examples every where in Holy Writ, even from our Saviour and his Apostles, of external Acts of Adoration? Nay, which perhaps is a greater Argument to these men, do not they themselves use them? What mean else their set Looks,

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for-

formal Voice, and forc'd Gestures? In short, all comes to this, they will, they must have Ceremonies, but they must be of their own making; and their dislike is greater, 'tis to be fear'd, to the Church that enjoins 'em, than to the Things themselves. 'Tis true, the Law shall give place to the Gospel, nor shall there be any appointed Place for Sacrifice, for that it self shall be abolish'd; but worship we must, and how that shall be done without prescrib'd Place, Time, and Order, is absolutely inconceivable. Still we must worship in the beauty of holiness; and though we are neither confin'd to Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim, yet must we not forget the assembling ourselves together.

As for the Objections from hence against Set Forms, and the Pretensions to the Spirit, How vain and frivolous are they? Where is such Assistance promis'd? or upon what account indeed necessary? Let these Pretenders to Inspiration work Miracles too, and then we shall believe these extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost, which we rightly now judge already

already ceas'd. Besides, so little reason have they, that the very Opinion contradicts it self, and what they pretend an *Extemporary Effusion*, is no more than a *Form* to all the *Auditory*, who are ty'd up to those Words they are pleas'd to put together for them, and are often work'd up by Heat and Passion to say *Amen* to no better than Nonsense; sometimes, I fear, even Blasphemy it self. Strange is it, that men otherwise sober, and that will not venture a Sermon, which they only address to the People, without Care and Accuracy of Wording, should yet dare to entertain Commerce with God at all adventures, buoy'd up with a little Popular Applause and Self-conceit. Most evident it is, that what they would make the World believe is immediately from Heaven, is attainable by Memory, and a Volubility of Speech, and perfected by a great share of Confidence. Then do we truly worship in Spirit, when after our Blessed Saviour's Example we pray with Warmth and Devotion in a sound well-weigh'd Form of Words; nor does the Almighty ever deny his Assistance, or the Petitions of such Adorers.

So sensible has all the World been of the Necessity of a Form, that there is no Age or Church that has left themselves at liberty; nor was it ever thought on, till Religion grew a Blind for Faction and Interest. We worship not as the Jews did, with such Ceremonies as are *signs and figures of things to come*; those we know are and were to be abolish'd: But our external visible Services imply the Truth of the Promises already exhibited, and our outward Acts are testimonies of our inward Faith, Love, Humility, and other Christian Virtues. Nor is it to be question'd but that divers Saints and Holy Prophets did in this manner adore; nor is this taken away but perfected by our great Lawgiver. Would it not be very strange that Christianity, which gives us Rules of Conversation and Civility, teaches us Obedience to our Prince, Submission to Governors, Respect and Kindness to all men in general, should yet suffer us to make our approaches to the Almighty with Disrespect and Rudeness? Yet do we not often see such men as will pay due Reverence to a Neighbour or Equal, rush into the Place
of

of Worship, and the Presence of God himself, without the least shew of Devotion and Respect?

'Tis allow'd, all men in comparison of the great God are equal, and Titles cease when we have regard to one Omnipotent: But this should be so far from lessening, that it should infinitely heighten our outward Acts of Submission and Humility: Is he not our Master, where is then our Reverence? Is he not our Lord, where is then our Fear? Thus on the one side have some wander'd from the meaning of the Text; nor do the Papists less err on the other, who are so far from worshipping in Spirit, that they still retain that Sacrifice that was once offer'd up for all; that cloud and load their Religion with innumerable Ceremonies; that content themselves with repeating so many Prayers, and conclude they have then sufficiently worshipp'd, when their Set-task is finish'd. Now how insignificant and senseless must this Devotion be, how unacceptable to the God of Purity and Omniscience, that

that searches the Heart, and expects a reasonable Service? Or how can it be agreeable to Him who sent our Saviour into the World to remove this very Bondage from the Jews, and to establish a Spiritual and Divine Worship? Nay, can it satisfy a man of Sense and Consideration? Yet so far can the Prejudice of Custom and Education prevail, that this is the known Practice of those that profess that Religion.

Happy! thrice happy are we then in the Constitution of our Church! May it long so flourish.

Whilst we have no Ceremonies but what Decency require, and Primitive Practice allows; have Instructions plain and easy, Prayers serious and accommodated to the meanest Capacity, and so free from just exception, that we may well question that man's Understanding, always his Charity, that refuses to say Amen.

But thus much of the First Particular.

I come

I come now to what is meant by;

II. *Worshipping him in Truth.*

For though nothing hinders but they may be here taken one for the Exposition of the other; yet have we hitherto, and shall still treat of it as it was oppos'd to the False Worship of the Samaritans; which was now to be abolish'd, and they no longer to worship they knew not what on Mount Gerizim. So that by it is forbidden all Corporeal Representations of the Almighty (for so the Samaritans did worship him), as all mixture of Heathenish Superstition and Idolatry: Who are said in Scripture to belye the Almighty, whilst they chang'd the truth of God into a lie, and serv'd the Creature as or with the Creator, who is blessed for evermore.

Then do we worship him in Truth, when in serious and devout Meditation we can work up our Thoughts above all things

things material; when we only contemplate a Being incorporeal, infinite in all that's great and good, and to him alone, as such, offer up our Supplications.

What shall we say then to the Romanists, who would still confine the Almighty to Mount Gerizim? What else mean their Prayers and Offerings, their fam'd Shrines, their long and tedious Pilgrimages to some particular Chappel, or renown'd Altar? Still have we the Boast of the Practice of their Fathers, though equally fall'e with that of the Samaritans, and a Religion made and upheld by Superstition and Policy, deliver'd down as Primitive.

Still have we a mixture of Idolatry in their Worship; nay, the God of Heaven almost dethron'd by a Crowd of feign'd Saints and counterfeit Miracles. With what glittering Tawdriness are their Churches fill'd? How are their Altars beset with Puppets, the variousness and ridiculousness of

of whose Dress serves, only to amuse and divert the Traveller? How do they dare to represent the Almighty under the Decays of Age, and lye prostrate before each Image, their Fancies prompt em to chuse? This is the daily Practice of all in general; and if this be not Idolatry, certainly there never was any yet: Nor can we ever distinguish between the Opinion and general Practice of a Church, so far as to excuse them.

To conclude:

Let us that have a plain and easy Rule to walk by, so carry our selves between these two dangerous Extremes, as by our Examples to promote and uphold the Well-being of the best of Churches. Let us be constant to our Liturgies, fervent at our Devotions: Thus shall we with Decency and Order worship the God of Truth, and offer up a reasonable, a spiritual, and acceptable Service. Thus shall we after a Peace of Conscience which we

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may

may justly expect in the Performance of our Duties, be made Partakers of an Inestimable Reward.

To which God, &c.

F I N I S.

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